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ONLINE EXCLUSIVE

Pugh Video Exclusive

Detroit City Council President Charles Pugh participates in the Hungry4Equality 100-day hunger strike. Crystal Proxmire sat down with Pugh in this online video exclusive.

Find this video under Michigan News at www.Pridesource.com

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE

Greetings from Tampa Bay

Be sure to stop by the Between The Lines Facebook page for real-time updates from BTL Publishers and delegates Jan Stevenson and Susan Horowitz, on the Democratic National Convention floor!

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Hungry4Equality: Week 4

www.Hungry4Equality.com

Day 22

"During the past 17 years I've been out, I have been shunned, rejected, assaulted, and experienced many other negative issues as a result of me being open about my sexuality. Although I know that being open and gay is not easily accepted, I feel that I should be accepted as I am! In no way am I trying to force who I am down anybody's throat - I just want to enjoy the same rights as if I were straight."

- Tobias Davis

Day 23

"I am only one of many who are making a public statement that the persecution of my entire LGBT family has got to stop. Our state and federal government cannot continue to use and uphold laws that make an entire population less than equal in the whole of humanity."

- Tom Zerafa

Day 24

"The ongoing oppression both active and passive of LGBT people is morally reprehensible and needs to end. Truth and justice will win out."

- Rev. Jim Lynch

Day 25

"It was an honor to join the movement for Equality that Affirmations helped to start. 24 hours was a small sacrifice for a huge issue that requires a full commitment from each of us. Let's keep the momentum going, so that one day we won't have to protest for our rights--we will have fought and won them."

- Charles Pugh

Day 26

"Equality isn't going to come to us, we have to drag it kicking and screaming into the light. It's not going to be easy, but we already know what the alternative is, and it's unacceptable."

-D'Anne Witkowski

Day 27

"Being a striker allows me to really give back to my community by supporting equality for all of my neighbors."

- Shelley Beaudoin

Day 28

"I've been in protests and rallys and have had my voice heard. Now, as a striker, I can be seen and heard as an individual."

- Charlie Erikson

The public can visit the Equality Hall of Shame and the strikers at Affirmations in Ferndale. People who want to strike can sign up by contacting Megh Hollowell at Affirmations at 248-398-7105.

Step Up or Shut Up:

Pugh on the Hunger Strike and on Detroit Politics

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

FERNDALE - "Stop complaining if you're not doing anything to change it. Step up or shut up." That's what Detroit City Council President Charles Pugh has to say about folks who sit on the sidelines in any community.

His new Step Up or Shut Up campaign is his push to recruit citizens, especially minorities, to get involved in local politics. "It's for the Detroit LGBT community to offer themselves as candidates and to serve on the boards. There are so many other ways to serve like block clubs and neighborhood associations. …We need people who are in the mix, with sweat on their brows, working to improve what's good and to improve what's bad…. I want them at the drawing board. I want them at the decision making table. I want them at the ballot box. I want them at the pews, in the neighborhoods as business owners, as employers as students."

He said that Detroit is "a work in progress," that requires everyone to be involved.

The Gay-Ing Of Detroit

The busy City Council President, who is the first openly gay elected official in the city, took a day to participate in the Hungry 4 Equality 100 day hunger strike. Strikers, in succession, go 24 hours without food and they sit on a stage in the window of Affirmations for the day to showcase their support for equal rights.

"This effort was creative for collective effort so that ultimately people could raise their voice and say that equality is just that, it's all people's rights are equal, no more important than the other," Pugh said. "I think that because we are such an advanced society we often forget that not everybody has the same rights."

While much of the focus has been on Pugh's council leadership and the challenges of Detroit's harsh economy, Pugh has been involved in efforts in on behalf of his LGBT brothers and sisters. One on-going effort is the Detroit Safe Schools initiative which provides training to public school staff on important LGBT issues, including bullying. Pugh said that two schools have gone through training so far: Communications and Media Arts High School and Central High School.

He is also working with PFLAG Detroit to build their capacity to help families in the city. He's brought PFLAG together with the Detroit Parent Network, who has committed to monthly LGBT engagement. He's taken fliers to various locations through the city to attract parents to the PFLAG meetings and for people to get involved with leadership in both organizations. "There are zero GSAs [Gay Straight Alliances] in Detroit Public Schools," he said. "We need these to open minds and open hearts, to cut down on drop outs. Kids are being verbally and physically abused. Kids are being kicked out of their homes because of it [being gay]."

In terms of his own experience being a gay public official, Pugh said he's not had many problems. "We all get judged for lots of reasons, whether it's an open judgment or an overt judgment – race, gender, orientation, how we dress, socio-economic status, our religion or lack thereof. So for me I can't, if I'm going to be successful, worry about who is judging me."

He added that "Jessie Jackson said excellence is the best deterrent to racism. Well [I say] progressive action is the best deterrent to homophobia."

Detroit Challenges

The biggest challenges Pugh faces on City Council are financial.

"Dwindling revenues and growing costs is a major challenge for cities across the state of Michigan," he said. "There's an aging infrastructure. We have roughly 11,000 employees and 20,000 retirees and that is a heavy responsibility.

"Every single source of revenue is going down. Our major source is income tax. We've lost population. We've got unemployment, and foreclosures. It's a prescription for not having enough resources."

He also said, "The crime rate bothers me and saddens me. It challenges us."

Setting the budget is the top priority of city

Hungry 4 Equality

The Community Center Network, comprised of eight organizations across Michigan has united to bring awareness and urgency to their local communities about the assault LGBT people are under in the state.

People can learn more about the project which will run continuously at Affirmations Community Center in Ferndale, by visiting

» www.Hungry4Equality.com

council, a task which has been a huge challenge for Detroit. "When we get to the point we ask 'what are the core services,' it's a difficult conversation to have. We have to set the police and fire budgets, but we also have to keep the lights on."

One way Detroit has saved money is by privatizing some services. "It's a case by case challenge. Privatizing doesn't always save money," Pugh said. "I'm not anti-privatization, but it should be done the right way, not for a short term savings. If a credible, data-based case can be made I'm not opposed to it."

One big debate in the city has been the threat of having an Emergency Financial Manager instituted by the state. In the face of such threats, Mayor Dave Bing agreed to a consent decree with the state that Pugh disagreed with. "We don't need an intervention. We need assistance, but we don't need a take over," the council president said. "We can manage our own way through this.

"…Because of bad decision making in the Mayor's office we were on a collision course… He should have had a deficit-elimination plan… If I were Mayor I would have been much more proactive in working to create a deficit elimination plan that was sustainable and worked. There was not enough focused effort by the Mayor's office."

Detroit Successes

Pugh said that city council has taken steps towards improved financial solvency, including passing a balanced budget with money set aside towards deficit elimination. They have ordered a mid-year financial review to determine if city administrators are staying on task. And they have instituted a collective purchasing policy for supplies, where all departments are required to purchase things like copiers, office supplies, cleaning supplies and other necessities with bulk pricing unless they can find those items cheaper elsewhere.

Something Pugh hopes will make a big financial impact is a partnership formed with Compuware to collect unpaid city taxes. "Reverse commuters and employers are not collecting the Detroit tax, and there are businesses in the city not collecting. Individual filers are not paying local taxes," Pugh said.

Increased development is also expected to raise city revenue. "Development projects we've approved and made better, the building of Whole Foods Market and being part of that effort," are things Pugh is proud of. He also serves on the Riverfront Conservancy Board where he is part of the remediation and continued progress of building up a beautiful shoreline where visitors feel safe and welcome. And remediation of the Uniroyal site is another development that gives Pugh hope for the city.

Change From Journalist To Public Figure

Pugh was born and raised in Detroit. He left from 1989 to 1999 to go to college and to work as a journalist in several other cities across the country before returning to the hometown he knew and loved. Up until 2009 when he began his campaign for Council, Pugh was a journalist, well known for his seat on the Fox 2 News desk. And while the change from journalist to politician has been rewarding, it had some challenges too.

"For the first year and a half I was uncomfortable saying what my opinion was and having a vote," he said. "As a journalist I was used to keeping my opinion to myself and not being vocal. I had to un-learn that. But I learned to say very clearly why I am voting the way I was.

"Having journalists do what I think are unfair stories about me is tough. Having personal things reported on is also tough. As a journalist you're in the public eye but you still have a private life. But when you're elected you don't have a personal life.

"Ever since I was 20 years old I've been on TV, but I was always taught to cling closely to your phone number and personal address. Some of my colleagues had stalkers, a couple were dangerous. You protect your private information. But the exact opposite happens when you run for office. I went from being guarded tightly to everything being out there, like my address, my phone, my salary being public."

Other than the privacy concerns, the transition has overall been good for Pugh. "I went from being in the media to politics and it required a lot of hard work, but everything does. There's a lot of similarities between both professions. You have to do a lot of writing, a lot of research. You care about facts and look at all sides of the issue… You have knowledge of the city, knowledge of whose who, who is important and why… A lot of it is common sense and knowing your community."

Future Plans

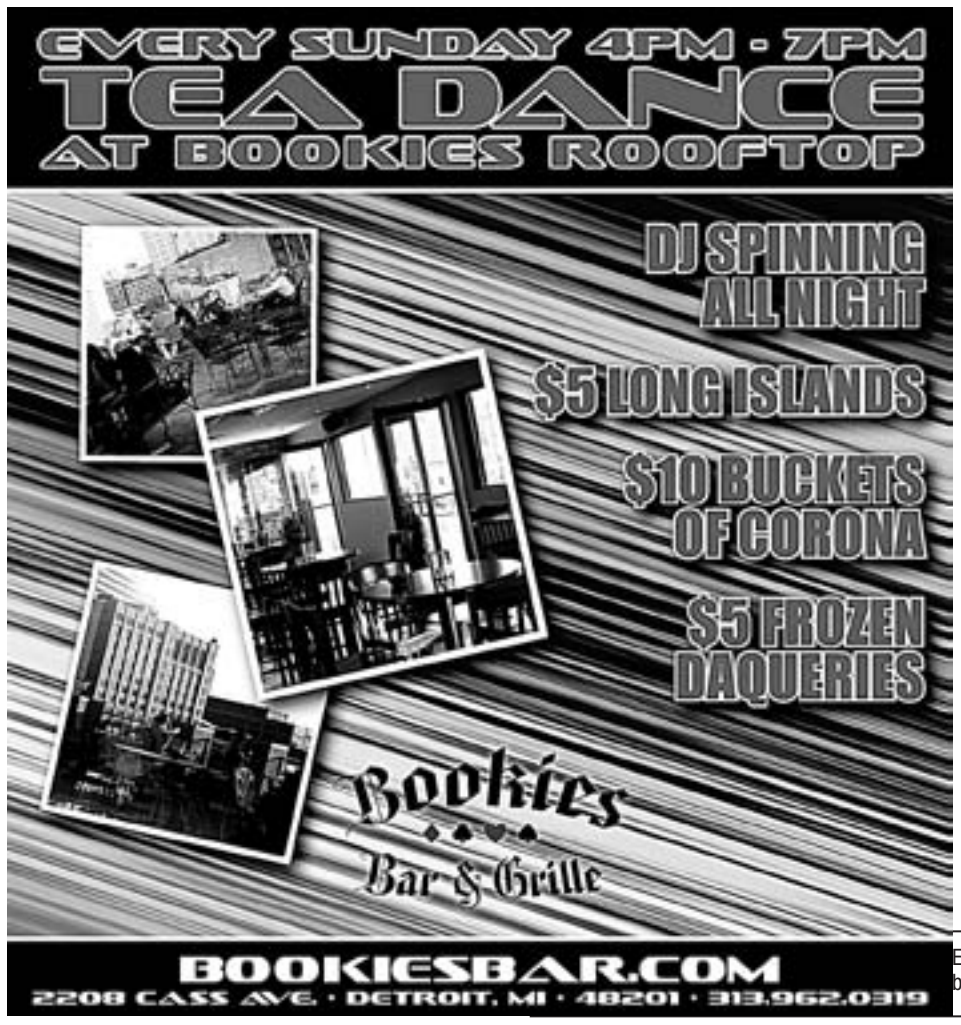
Now that Pugh has sat in the council president seat, he had decided to change direction once his term is up. "If I run for anything it will be for mayor," he said. "It's definitely something I'm considering."

When asked what would be different being mayor that being council president, Pugh explained, "The main thing is on council you're a legislature. You can't manage city services, you can only manage your own staff. You pass ordinances, you approve things. As mayor you administer. You hire, disciple and fire officials. Ultimately you are the main person to make things happen."

While he considers running for the top leadership position in the City, Pugh hopes others will get involved in leadership as well. "A lot of the restrictions are self-imposed. Most people just don't try out of fear, fear or inadequacy. But the reality is they do have a lot to offer." Hence the Step Up or Shut Up campaign.

To learn more about Charles Pugh and his Step Up or Shut Up campaign go to

» www.charlespughandyou.com.



Extended briefs are

BRIEFS

EAST LANSING

MSU Speaker Series to Examine Development of Sexual Orientation

Michigan State University will host a speaker series this fall examining the issue of whether sexual orientation is determined before birth.

The series is titled "Whom You Love: The Biology of Sexual Orientation." It will feature a number of national experts who will discuss the scientific evidence that processes at work before birth influence the development of sexual orientation.

The lectures will be held at 4 p.m. every Monday, starting Sept. 10 through Dec. 10, in Room 115B Wells Hall.

Providing funding for the series are the MSU Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives, the College of Human Medicine, Lyman Briggs College, the LBGT Resource Center and the Neuroscience Program.

"Scientific findings over the past 15 years or so have built a solid case that events and processes at work before birth have an influence on whether a person will grow up to be gay or straight," said Marc Breedlove, director of the MSU Neuroscience Program and organizer of the series. "We want to bring that information together in a format that everyone can understand so they can see that nature has a say in whom you love."

For more on the series, including a list of speakers as well as information on a documentary that Breedlove is developing on the subject, go to www.whomyoulove.com.

ST. LOUIS, MO

Mr. Midwest Leather Contest is Looking for Good Men

This year's Mr. Midwest Leather Contest hits St. Louis, Missouri the weekend of Oct. 5-7. The Mr. Midwest Leather title represents 13 Midwestern states and is open to Leather Men from Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Indiana, Missouri, Minnesota, Michigan, Ohio, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Nebraska, and Kentucky. The producer of the contest is looking for men interested in participating and contributing to the community through outreach, fundraising and education through the platform of the Mr. Midwest Leather title.

"This is not a beauty contest or about the body," said Charlie Schoenherr, producer of the contest. "This is about you, the community and making a difference in people's lives and your own, through community involvement, fundraising and promoting the Leather lifestyle."

The current Mr. Midwest Leather 2011, Mike Prater of Evansville, Indiana, has traveled throughout the Midwest and participated in the 2012 International Mr. Leather Contest in Chicago, Illinois.

"This has been a great experience," Prater said, "I've had a chance to meet some wonderful people, make new friends, raise a lot of money for charity, visit a lot of places and attend Leather events around the country. You make bonds with other Leather Men and Women; bonds that will last forever."

For qualifications, go to www.MrMidwestLeather.com. Contestants should be ready to make a contribution to the community and represent the title at International Mr. Leather. The contest will be Oct. 5-7 at Bad Dog Bar & Grill, St. Louis, Missouri. It is part of the Midwest Leather Weekend, including the Midwest Puppy Contest, the Puppy Mosh Pit Party and the Midwest LeatherBall. For more information, go to www.MidwestLeatherWeekend.com

Healthy Relationships:

KICK Delves Deeper in Tuesday Night Talk

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

DETROIT - What makes a healthy relationship work?

The folks at KICK, The Agency for LGBT African Americans, thought this was an important topic to explore, so for their Aug. 14 discussion group they invited a gay couple and a lesbian couple to share their story and answer questions about how they have a healthy relationship.

Unfortunately the lesbians didn't show, but it gave Anthony Boykins and Henry Walker a chance to tell a love story slightly more realistic than the hetro-normative Cinderella story that so many Americans base their ideas about love around.

Walker was visiting from Chicago three years ago when some friends took him to The Woodward. "I was standing at the back of the Woodward, having my first June Bug. There was nobody in there so my friends and I started singing. I saw him and I was like 'who is he?' And I had to go introduce myself," Walker said. The pair had such a nice time that they ended up going out for Mexican food and sitting in the parking lot talking until the sun came up.

"The time we met I was not looking for anything. But I saw him and I knew, like 'wow, he's not from here,'" Boykins said. "He is so great. He's educated. He likes to help people – he'd help the whole wide world. It happened and I ain't trying to stop it. It just hit me."

Like every relationship they've had their struggles. Early on it was the matter of the commute. Walker would drive from Chicago until finally he decided to find work in Detroit and get a place. He described the moment he knew they would have a lasting love. "He's not always too expressive, but he took me to look for apartments and we looked at one. Then he says, 'Why are you looking for a place? I love you. We can move together,' and that's when I knew that this was real."

Boykins, clearly the quieter one, had moments of sentimentality that touched the crowd and made Walker get sparkles in his eyes. "I don't see no end to us really. I mean, you have to die sometime, but no end until that," Boykins said.

The discussion centered around what makes a healthy relationship. Many in the group were single men, still struggling to find the right person. When asked what is important in a healthy relationship, most said communication though others talked about humor, compromise, trust and passion.

"Passion is being able to see your boy from across the room, and he's wearing boy shorts, flip flops…hmmm…ok, I'm speaking for myself, but it's when you see him and you want to go across the room," said one young single person.

Someone else later noted that "the younger generation learns romance from BET," adding that because of the glamorized playa lifestyle, "some men are too afraid to be nice."

KICK founder Curtis Lipscomb recalled going to a bar on gentlemen's night and enjoying mellow, romantic music like jazz or soul while talking with other men. "When I'm at the club and I hear Little Wayne I don't feel very loving."

Another complication brought up was the fact that people get to know each other differently than in the past.

"There's no need to court anymore," someone chimed in. "You can go to someone's Facebookpage and it's all there. Who they are. Where's their family from? What are their goals? You don't have conversations and get to know someone."

Others talked about the confusion of how one should be nice and behave appropriately in a same-sex relationship. "Sometimes if you hold a door for a guy he'll get mad and say that's he's not a girl," someone said.

"One way we learn about relationships is to mirror successful relationships," Lipscomb said. For him having a gay uncle made it easier to visualize a healthy gay relationship for himself, but he acknowledged that many people don't have that. Some even have the additional problem of being estranged from their families.

"I hate when you meet a guy and he wants to take you to his family and says 'they don't have a problem with me, but they don't like the whole gay thing', so we gotta act a certain way. I don't like that shit," said someone in the group.

Fortunately Boykins and Walker have family support and a good network of LGBT supporters in their life, including close family relationships and a gay uncle in Walker's family. Being active in KICK and going to positive community events helps solidify their bond.

Boykins says there is compromise and patience. "Like when he needs something for his art and wants to go to Lowes, I know to just be patient and let him get what he needs to get, and I try to think of what he might be making. I know it makes him happy and I know he'll make something beautiful. So I give him his space."

Sometimes in relationships people have an idea of a fairy-tale perfection, but Boykins said being realistic is a better approach. "I didn't have expectations. I just knew what I was not going to do. I just knew I had this good person in my life, so I didn't put too much expectation on him….This is my friend first. But we are in love. We get along. We talk to each other. We watch funny programs on TV. We're in love, but we also kick it."

INFO

Live & Learn

Every Tuesday KICK members and the public are invited to take part in a Live & Learn discussion, which cover a variety of topics. To find out more about KICK and the Live & Learn series at

» http://e-kick.org.

Government Agencies Reach Out on Importance of Reporting Crime

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

FERNDALE - "We, as a community, haven't had the best relationships with government agencies," said Equality Michigan Director of Victim Services Nusrat Ventimiglia as she introduced a panel of representatives from State and Federal departments in town to discuss the issue of crime reporting. "But times have changed and we have tremendous allies in the FBI and law enforcement."

Representatives from the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and the U.S. Department of Education joined Equality Michigan and Affirmations on Aug. 22 for the Federal Hate Crimes Dialogue about LGBT Bullying and Harassment and Hate Crimes in Our Communities. The event was at Affirmations in Ferndale.

Ventimiglia explained that the LGBT community has historically underreported crime, noting that at Equality Michigan only 52 percent of the cases they hear about are reported to law enforcement.

Brenda Jeanetta, Corruption and Civil Rights Coordinator for the FBI, said, "There is a reluctance to report a crime because of reluctance to admit affiliation with the LGBT community. Maybe someone doesn't want to come to law enforcement, but they may come to Equality Michigan or Affirmations."

The importance of reporting isn't just so that the victim can get help. It can help stop someone from going on to victimize others. And the numbers of crimes are used when lobbying for legislation, applying for grants, and showing society in general how crimes of bias hurt an entire class of people.

Dan Levy of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights said, "It's too easy when things aren't being reported for people to say it's no big deal."

He said that crime reporting data helps demonstrate the need for inclusive hate crimes protections and programming to address the needs of the LGBT community. He added an example of where one incident report can have an un-told chain effect.

"People don't always see the way their reporting makes a difference," Levy said. He gave an example of a police officer being unprofessional on a traffic stop. "A person tells the police supervisor about an action. The supervisor talks to the officer, or maybe even the whole department, and from then on people are treated differently, but they [the person who made the report] may never know about it."

Levy also bridged the gap between federal hate crimes and state hate crimes. The Matthew Sheppard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 only covers crimes that the Federal government is able to prosecute and is limited to violent acts. "Personal property crimes…need to be covered by a state hate crimes law. In Michigan the State Police, the Sheriffs Association, the Chiefs of Police Association and the Prosecuting Attorneys Association have all come out in support of amending the state hate crimes law to include sexual orientation, expression and identity. …From a law enforcement perspective, this is a law enforcement issue. This is a community safety issue. It's not a gay rights issue. It's not about lifestyles. It's about people being protected from crimes."

Under the current Michigan hate crimes law, if someone does property damage or makes threats towards someone with elements of ethnic intimidation or religious hate, or hate against people because of their age, gender or disability they could be charged with a hate crime. This means that their action was not just intended to harm the victim, but also to spread fear in that victim's community. However, if someone commits a crime meant to spread fear in the gay community, there is no legal recognition of this broader impact. Levy said that sometimes local law enforcement may not take it seriously if someone has a gay slur graffittied on their garage or if other threats are made, because there is no good law in place defining those as bias motivated.

Ted Wammers of the U.S. Dept. of Education explained that students need not fear reporting bullying or harassment, because even though the anti-bullying laws are not enumerated to protect LGBT youth, they do have protection for every student from the acts of bullying.

U.S. District Attorney Ann Thompson also assured the public that they work within the confines of the law to get justice for people in the LGBT community, explaining that sometimes harassment can be given harsher penalties if it falls into the realm of other laws. For example, there are federal laws that can be used if threats are made over a computer or using U.S. Mail and there are sentencing enhancements that can be made if other forms of bias are used.

The overall message of the day was that people who are victims of crimes should report them, if not to law enforcement, at least to an agency like Affirmations or Equality Michigan so they can track the number of reported incidents and let victims know about what support may be available to them. Affirmations refers victims to Equality Michigan for reporting.

For more information on Affirmations go to
›› www.goaffrmations.org
To report a crime or for more information on Equality Michigan go to
›› www.equalitymichigan.org.

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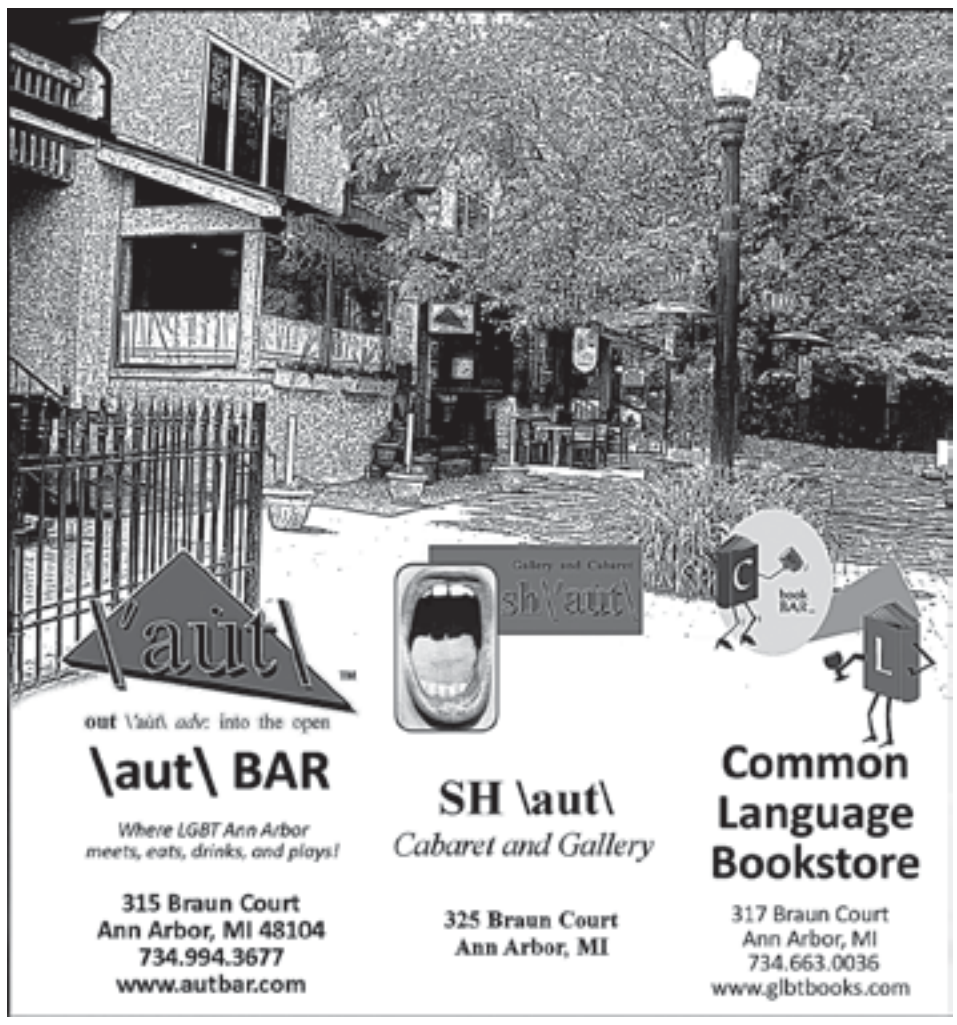

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NATIONAL GAY NEWSPAPER GUILD
Nothing average about it

Conventions Provide a Stark Difference on A Better Future

Viewpoint

OPINION BY MICHELLE E. BROWN

So a Mormon, a Catholic and Atlas walk into a bar.....

The beginning of a bad joke? No, it's the beginning of the Republican National Convention. But if you're a woman, poor, a person of color or gay, YES it is the beginning of a bad joke.

Now that the Olympics are over and vacations are winding down, it's time to get focused on November and nothing will get folks focused in, on what's at stake more than the upcoming conventions.

The intention of past conventions was to educate attendees about the party's platform and to nominate a candidate, but this year's Republican National Convention is more like an infomercial rolling out a GOP agenda that has been building steam, culminating with a coronation of the party's standard bearers.

Mitt Romney's nomination has been a foregone conclusion for several months after the Mormon business man basically out lasted a field of candidates that fell off, dropped out or self-destructed. The only suspense was the selection of the vice-presidential running mate which we now know is Tea Party poster child Paul Ryan.

Although he's not talking about it that much these days, Ryan has in the past credited atheist philosopher Ayn Rand for inspiring his interest in public service and entry into the political arena, even giving copies of her "Atlas Shrugged" as Christmas gifts. More recently the focus has been on his budget plan, anti-abortion stance, "faithful" Catholicism, dedication to the P90X workout plan and of course his 8 percent body fat.

At the RNC in Tampa, Mitt and Paul plan to energize the base and convert the undecided that "A better future" is possible if given the reins of leadership.

They're banking that any voters still sitting on the fence will be moved by the glitz, glamour and overlook the basic contradictions of their ideology with today's diverse America.

Who'd have thought that the party which in recent years has been most closely identified with the traditional values of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) community would have as its standard bearers a Mormon and a Catholic, but the times my friends they are a changing.

The well-funded call for traditional, conservative "American" values has become the tie that binds together supporters of this candidacy.

Despite committee chairman Priebus's disclaimer that, "This is the platform of the Republican Party. It's not the platform of Mitt Romney," the party platform provides a window to the soul of the party Romney/Ryan hope to lead into power.

This is the cornerstone of the beliefs held dear by party faithful so how can we ignore its influence on this "Better Future" on display in Tampa?

Much has been said about Todd Akins comments on rape – legitimate or forcible – as it relates to abortion. This, rightly, set off a firestorm of condemnation among not only women, but even Republicans from Mitt Romney down, with a message that's clear "RAPE is Rape." But there was less substantive discussion of the reality that, although Akin's remarks were outrageous, they were not outside the realm of the far right views on abortion and women's reproductive rights.

In 2011, Rep. Akin co-sponsored a bill which was supported by Paul Ryan that would have banned federal funding for abortions except in cases of so-called forcible rape. It was later reintroduced with the word "forcible" removed from the bill's language.

Besides the "Forcible Rape" legislation, Ryan and Akins also cosponsored a federal personhood bill, the "Sanctity of Human Life Act of 2009," which declares that a fertilized egg is entitled to the exact same legal rights as a human being. One interpretation of this act would not simply ban abortion; it would turn many forms of birth control into the legal equivalent of a murder weapon.

While staunchly supporting the rights of the unborn, the party platform stands in its denial of rights for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Americans. Which begs the question how do you staunchly support the rights of a child to be born, even if its conception is the result of rape, yet strip the same child of its rights if it is born gay?

One might also wonder since these same individuals dare to define the legitimacy of rape while delegitimizing the rights of LGBT Americans, would rapists get a free pass if the rape was part of "conversion" attempt against a gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual or queer American?

While this year's Democratic Party Platform is the most pro-LGBT in history, the Republican Party Platform seems to want to pull the country backwards when it comes to LGBT equality. It includes language that implies that for the GOP, LGBT people are not among the Americans who deserve "dignity and respect."

"A Better Future," - only for some. While talking about creating jobs, rebuilding the economy and supporting American families, the Republican Party Platform says to LGBT Americans – but not for you.

The Republican Party platform opposes marriage equality and supports a federal constitutional amendment defining marriage as the "union of one man and one woman" referring to recent court decisions as "more than a matter of warring legal concepts and ideals. It is an assault on the foundations of our society, challenging the institution which, for thousands of years….has been entrusted with the rearing

See VP: Michelle Brown, page 17

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Welcoming! (Including) Affirming?

BY REV. JIM LYNCH, INTERIM PASTOR, MCC-DETROIT

Like so many, I read with interest these days about all of the religious bodies struggling with the issues of sexuality in general, homosexuality specifically.

I see denominational assemblies simply deny inclusion to our community; and that breaks my heart. I see churches who allow LGBT folks to be "welcomed" into congregations – as long as they don't try to preach, teach Sunday School, or pass the collection plate with their "gay agenda."

I see churches that ordain LGBT folks, but then make it difficult for them to find a pulpit. The combinations, policies, terminologies, and theologies are seemingly limitless. Don't get me wrong: I definitely applaud the fact that nearly every mainline religious organization has dealt or is dealing with the LGBT inclusion issue on some level.

Fifty years ago, homosexuals inclusion, if raised, was for most a no-brainer. "Those people" cannot be a part of the body of believers. Period. End of discussion. So, the progress that is happening is amazing. BUT – just how much progress has been made toward the full inclusion of LGBT folks?

As interim pastor of Metropolitan Community Church of Detroit, I'm a ministering part -- 20-plus years -- of a denomination founded 44 years ago (one year before the Stonewall Riots) to meet the spiritual and religious needs of our rainbow community. Our congregations often include LGBT folks, straight folks, people of all makes, shapes, ethnicities, colors, backgrounds, models.

We have been through the discussions in which our mainline counterparts just now find themselves, and we have moved on. I share that piece of information only to establish my perspective.

My question to those who have included LGBT people is this: Are we welcomed and included and affirmed in all areas of church life or are we merely tolerated and kept on the fringes? Churches need to strive to move beyond merely welcoming and on to including, affirming, perhaps even to celebrating the uniqueness of these "newcomers."

It's difficult for an LGBT person to sit in a mainline congregation that lifts up the traditional family as the model to live by. We feel left out, out of place. Many of these churches celebrate

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► Welcoming

Continued from p. 10

life events like marriages, births, and such, with little thought to including the anniversary of that "gay couple" or "that lesbian sitting in the last pew."

In many cases, LGBT people, welcomed as we may or may not be, are often still invisible in terms of full inclusion. Why be part of a church that tells me that I may attend, join, and participate, but where people like me cannot be in leadership?

Why attend a church that allows for the ordination of people like me, but where local congregations can still exhibit homophobia in the selection of leadership, leaving gay clergy hanging in the wind -- voices crying in the wilderness for fair inclusion -- unable to secure meaningful ministry positions in which they are allowed to exercise their gifts, training and experience?

To the bodies who are moving in the right direction, I say "Praise God!" "Thank you!" But I also encourage you to develop systems to properly disseminate the good news and to educate local judicatories and congregations, empowering them, perhaps pushing them forward to find the truth of God's love for and inclusion of all peoples.

There are too many negative voices in the religious community. If you are going to take a stand for full inclusion, then you need to follow through to make sure that your new found awareness works its way down to the people in the pews.

This means new curriculums, new liturgies, new definitions of family, and often an entirely new paradigm for inclusion.

To do less is to simply give lip service to an entire ministry field; and while seen as well meaning, is often seen as a halfway measure and continuing hypocrisy. Churches are moving in the right direction, but I encourage you to "launch out into the deep". Become the loving inclusive people that God has called you to be.

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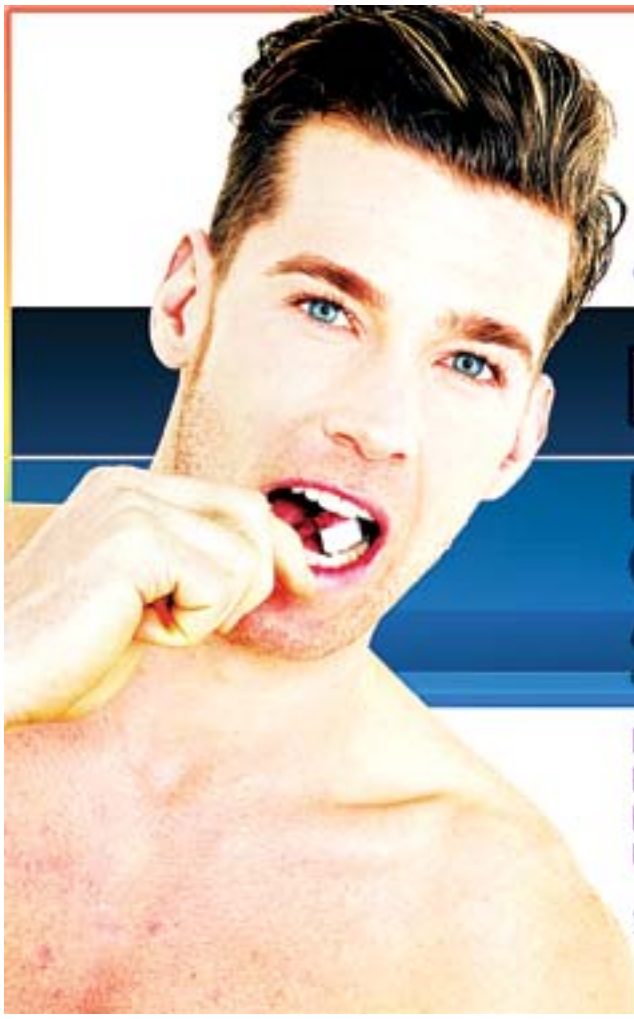

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The Michigan Lottery National Stage features high profile, up-and-coming national acts as well as established international stars. Located again this year between Main and Center streets at Seventh Street, the official list of confirmed national acts include multi-platinum rock band R.E.O. Speedwagon, best known for their hit number one singles "Keep on Loving You" and "Can't Stop This Feeling"; laid-back alternative and blues band G. Love & Special Sauce; Canadian Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and internationally renowned rock band The Guess Who; the funk legends Morris Day & The Time; local neo-soul breakout musician Mayer Hawthorne & The County, whose work has evoked praise from industry leaders from Mark Ronson to Snoop Dogg; as well as Detroit deaf hip-hop artist Sean Forbes, who will perform on the Michigan Lottery National Stage in compliment to the Deaf Arts Festival.

Detroit's best local bands will be featured on six additional music stages, with a quality mix and variety of music that is unmatched by any other festival. The local stages include the Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort Stage, Citizens Bank Stage, Ford Focus Stage, Made in Detroit Stage, Budweiser Stage, and the Pepsi Stage. Top local talent this year includes Amy Gore & Her Valentines, The Howling Diablos, Broadzilla, Gunnar & The Grizzly Boys, and Annabelle Road.

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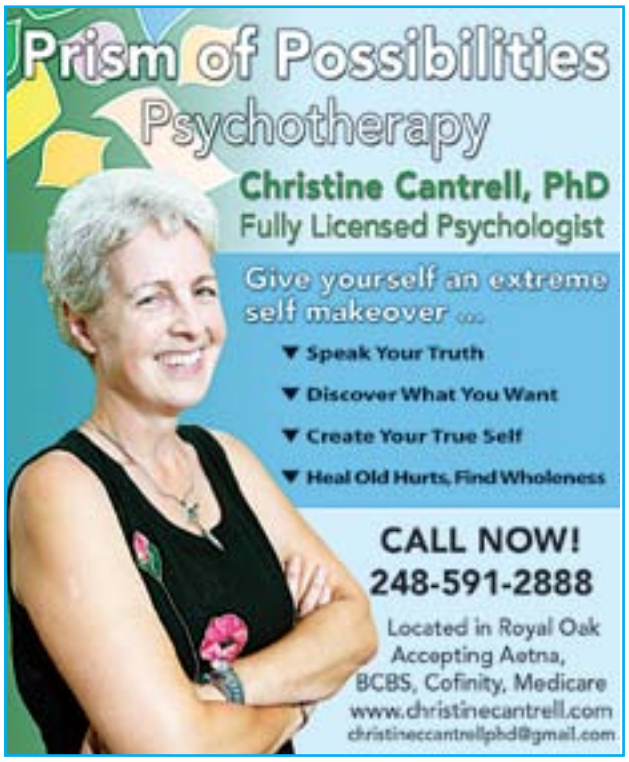

Hear Me Out

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Melissa Etheridge Gets In Touch With Roots. Plus: Elle Varner's Stunning Debut

Melissa Etheridge, '4th Street Feeling'

"Fearless Love" revisited Melissa's song-kill mode when the feisty return-to-rock was released two years ago, but her latest album really takes the beloved icon back to her roots. All the way back, in fact, to Kansas City (the disc's title is a nod to where she grew up). She's road-tripping through her Missouri hometown on the opening cut, a roots song with a harmonica solo and the kind of rawness that elicits late-'80s Etheridge. She longs for the simple life on the title track, and after this past year – her nasty custody battle went public – who can blame her? That angst and frustration finds an outlet: "Shout Now," referencing betrayal and a "bad dream" over an aggressive mix – a liberating shake-off. "The Shadow of a Black Crow" has her giving into temptation as a lost child; without going all "Skin" on us (remember how depressed she was then?), this is Etheridge at her darkest. The piano is a nice touch to "A Disaster," and on the romantic "I Can Wait," she's the voice of reason. Whereas the arena-rock sounds of U2 and Kings of Leon spurred "Fearless Love," Etheridge appropriately plays off the music of her early days: the Eagles, Bruce and Bob Seger. She's as stripped-down as she was 25 years ago on her self-titled debut, when songs like "Bring Me Some Water" made her a household name. The bluesy "Rock and Roll Me" has her teasing the lesbians with an extended euphemism of horizontal fun: "I hope you understand what I mean," she winks, all sexy sounding. Now where's that water? *Grade: B+*

Elle Varner, 'Perfectly Imperfect'

Cellulite and a flat chest might concern Elle Varner, as she so boldly admits on the dynamic "So Fly," but one thing the 23-year-old shouldn't worry about is the music on her stellar debut. Born into a musical family (her mom sang backup for Barry White), this talented neo-soul singer/songwriter has a smoky-voiced uniqueness that powers this 11-song set, from that witty piece of embrace-who-you-are self-deprecation – "How can I ever compete with 34 double Ds?" – to the country-fried smoothness of "Refill." Varner's accessibility is what makes her so refreshing; with her insecurities out in the open, she sings "Not Tonight," a moving ballad of disappointment and sadness over being gutless when it comes to approaching guys. It's clear she's a dreamer, because "Welcome Home" is the life she imagines for herself: Over a funk-soul groove, Varner aches for the right man and all the feelings of security that come with a relationship. But it's not all serious: in Estelle-sounding party vibe, she's hammered on "Oh What a Night," and the flirty "Sound Proof Room" suggests that four walls aren't enough to shut out the sex sounds. Lead single "Only Wanna Give It to You" has Varner so into a boy that even new shoes can't compare. If he doesn't love her back, that fool's got problems. *Grade: B+*

Also Out

Kendra Morris, 'Banshee'

Could Amy Winehouse's reincarnate be Kendra Morris? On the NYC songstress' debut, she sings with a similar bluesy soul that embellished the late British chanteuse's music. A potent slow-burner that sounds like a Winehouse and Lauryn Hill hybrid, "Pow" especially seems revived from the cutting-room floor of "Back to Black" – that's how good it is. Morris' unique lung-power isn't just defined by contemporaries, however; she makes songs like "Concrete Waves" and "If You Didn't Go" all her own, cooing with the celestial breeziness of a daydream.

Mariah Carey, 'Triumphant'

With not enough Mimi on the track, the single itself – with raps that make the songbird seem like a backup singer on her *own* song – is anything but triumphant. The remixes, however, salvage one of the vocal goddess' biggest letdowns: the "Vintage Throwback" rewinds to classic club-made Mariah, with re-sung vocals that should've been cut for the original. The "Pulse" mix is even better. Over a slamming house beat, Mariah belts over a choir that's reminiscent of Carey in her curly-haired prime. A sweet, sweet fantasy, indeed.

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Andrew Rannells and Justin Bartha as gay dads on the sitcom "The New Normal." Photo: NBC

► The New Normal

Continued from p. 19

flirtatious and sexy. Obviously people have really embraced "Modern Family" – audiences love that show and they love Eric and Jesse, so they're clearly doing something right. I'm a big fan of that show, but they're just different. Yes, we're going to be more affectionate, but it takes nothing away from what they're doing.

There's a heterosexual sex scene in the premiere episode. Will you ever get that intimate with Justin?

I don't know if we'll necessarily be riding each other. I don't know about that! (Laughs) But we shot another scene in bed together just this morning, actually. There's definitely more of that, but we're not on cable; we're on network. I don't know how much sex we'll actually get to do. Maybe down the road. I'll see what I can't do. (Laughs)

What kind of responsibility do you feel portraying one of the first major gay families on television?

As far as how it's received and how people perceive it, we're obviously not in control of that. I'm optimistic that we will find an audience, and I hope that people find it effective and moving and funny, but we'll see. My focus right now is telling the story to the best of my ability.

Has playing a dad on TV influenced you becoming a real-life parent?

It hasn't yet, but I haven't been in the mindset to start a family, either. I've been career-focused. I have thought about that: I wonder if this process will sort of change my mind about that as we get into these scenes with sonograms and things like that. Will I feel differently? Who knows. Maybe I'll want one myself. I have seven nieces and nephews, and that's good for me right now.

Why do you gravitate toward gay characters?

I've been lucky, particularly with (HBO's) "Girls." That was a really well-written, really funny and very well-developed gay character. I was pleased about that. Then, as far as Bryan goes, it was, again, a really wonderful opportunity to play a really great character. I don't really think about the sexuality of (the character) so much, but I do recognize the fact that I'm very lucky, particularly as a gay man able to play these gay parts that are really developed and are good roles.

Because those roles oftentimes go to straight actors?

Absolutely. Which is very strange to me. I mean, it's like any acting job. I've played a lot of straight characters, too, and if I had been denied those because I was gay, I would've been pissed. It comes down to who's best for the part, so I get that. But it is refreshing for me, as a homosexual, to play these gay characters. It's nice to get to play somebody who's a little bit closer to who you are.

Tell me about your role as a stripper in "Bachelorette."

It was the most eventful two days of work for me. The first day was super fun because it was just me and Isla Fisher – she's so cool. Then the next day, I had to rip off some tear-away cop pants in front of Kirsten Dunst and 40 extras.

No big deal.

Right. No big deal! That was nerve-wracking, but I think that movie is really great. I'm very proud to be a small part of that.

What do you miss most about your role as Elder Price in Broadway's "The Book of Mormon," which you wrapped in June?

I miss doing the show every night, I miss performing in front of that audience and I miss my cast. That was almost every day of my life for two years. I was wrapped up in that show with those people so it was hard to leave, obviously. I had the best-case scenario because I was leaving to do another job.

That job changed my life. I certainly wouldn't be where I am right now without it. All I wanted to do when I moved to New York 15 years ago was open a Broadway show. The fact that that was the show I got to open – I don't think you can really ask for more as an actor.

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The 2012 Wilde Awards: Another Season of Excellence Honored

BY CAROLYN HAYES

Charlyn Swarthout and Guy Sanville in "A Stone Carver," awarded Best Drama. Photo: Sean Carter

Changes took front and center at last night's 11th annual Wilde Awards, EncoreMichigan.com's celebration of the best of Michigan professional theater for the 2011–2012 season. Not only did the ceremony and reception move from downtown Detroit to West Bloomfield's new Berman Center for the Performing Arts, but the major changes in the organization itself received due attention. After a long year of uncertainty and transition, ownership of EncoreMichigan.com has been successfully transferred from site founder and event co-sponsor Between the Lines to the Michigan Equity Theatre Alliance, which produced this year's awards. The sense of passing the torch was in place from the opening statement, in which META Board Chair Carla Milarch took the podium to deliver a series of satirical remarks supposedly on behalf of host and EncoreMichigan.com editor Donald V. Calamia. The joke acknowledged the elephant in the room – this novel and unusual partnership of theater producers and reviewers, and the attendant questions it has raised – and dispensed with it swiftly to focus on the night's few dozen accolades.

EncoreMichigan.com's continuing expansion to statewide coverage was again reflected in the array of winners: Of the 18 theaters to receive awards, five were outside what had been the outlet's traditional market. Yet Calamia noted that the increased breadth consistently ramped up the competition, demonstrating the high quality of professional theater across Michigan. "After the critics got together late last spring to determine the nominees and the winners, one of the things that really surprised us was how evenly distributed the winners were," he reflected. "We hadn't planned that, nor was that one of our goals. But the excellent work produced by theaters large and small all across the state really stood out – and those are the shows that were honored tonight."

Among the standard Wilde Award categories, two new awards were introduced this year to highlight Shakespeare productions and performances. Michigan Shakespeare Festival received the Best of the Bard award for "The Winter's Tale," in addition to netting Best Design – Lights for designer Brian Scruggs and Best Comedy for "Tartuffe," the most wins of the night by a single theater.

For its part, The Berman proved an elegant backdrop as well as an almost too-amenable party venue. The inspired addition of bar stations and cabaret seating at the rear of the theater was so popular, longtime co-host Suzan M. Jacokes was moved to crack wise about the vast number of vacant seats up front. Yet the state-of-the-art facility was more than accommodating for the usual elements of a Wilde Awards production, from the mid-show musical selections from nominated production "Robocop: The Musical," to the seamless – and briefly animated – slide show visuals. "This was our first year at The Berman, and it's an amazing facility," Calamia said. "They made it clear almost a year ago that they wanted The Berman to be our new home, and they went all out to make this an exceptional experience for us. It was – and I appreciate how well this came off for a first-time event of this magnitude."

Special acknowledgment was abundant in the night's supplemental awards, including the always-offbeat Wilde-r Awards, which this year recognized a human ventriloquist's dummy and an inscrutably uproarious musical act, among others. Recognition of a more formal stripe included a special Performance of the Century Award to recognize the Actors' Equity Association for a century of service to the community. Michael A. Gravame, who received the Jim Posante Community Pride Award for his work at the helm of The Actors' Company, was one of many recipients who remarked on the challenges of pursuing theater, reflecting on personal and professional hardships before determinedly quoting Sondheim: "I'm still here."

In a final nod to EncoreMichigan.com's ownership transition, Calamia honored BTL publishers Jan Stevenson and Susan Horowitz with the Biggest Thank You Ever Award; they, in turn, announced the creation of the new Founder's Award for Excellence. In a nod to the former LGBT categories omitted this year, Stevenson and Horowitz presented the Founder's Award to the Ringwald Theatre for "Hedwig and the Angry Inch," the show that would have been selected for best production with LGBT themes or characters.

In total, distribution of 30 awards and a number of special features and vignettes raced by in less than two hours, a feat helped by the largely brief and jovial remarks of the recipients. In accepting the award for Best Drama, director Rhiannon Ragland of The Purple Rose Theatre Company's "A Stone Carver" began with humility, saying, "Thanks for taking a chance on a little girl from Flint." Peter Prouty, named Best Performance, Actor – Original One-Act Comedy or Solo Performance, charmingly evoked the genuine surprise that permeated much of the night: "Oh," he grinned timidly, "I always wanted one of these."

In brief expository comments, references to the highly politicized reading of "The Vagina Monologues" on the Capitol steps recently organized by Milarch, and the plethora of talent and achievement evident in the collective nominations and honorees, the Wilde Awards were once again a comprehensive reflection on the year in Michigan professional theater. Even the Critics' Choice Award recipient, The Hinterlands, was singled out in part for being a rare and thrilling import in a community that sees more artists leaving than returning.

Calamia summed up the 2011–2012 season with the same fortitude: "This was a season of change for the entire industry: A few theaters closed, even more opened – and the way EncoreMichigan.com functions also changed. But as we saw tonight, the energy in this community is amazing, and despite the hardships that all of us faced, amazing art was still produced. When times get tough, get out of the way: Artists are even tougher!"

For a complete list of Wilde Award winners, go to
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Happenings

OUTINGS

Thursday, Aug. 30

KGLRC Youth Group 7 p.m. The Resource Center Youth Group helps young people, ages 13 to 18, who are trying to come to terms with their sexuality in a sometimes-unaccepting society. Meets every Thursday from 7-9 p.m. at a confidential location. To attend, call or e-mail the resource center. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer, **Kalamazoo.** 269-349-4234. Kglrc.org

Friday, Aug. 31

50 and Better Friday Group 7 p.m. Designed for those 50 and better looking for an excuse to get out of the house. Goes out every other week or so for miniature golf, a movie, or other activity, per vote. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-4234. PhoenixChurch.org

Saturday, Sept. 1

Lesbian Euchre 6 p.m. No partner needed. For beginners to experienced. Come join the fun and meet new friends. Affirmations, 290 W. 9 Mile Road, **Ferndale.** 586-303-5977. lsbndanii@aol.com

Sunday, Sept. 2

GOAL Book Club 4 p.m. Get Out and Live's LGBT Book Club. Meets the first Sunday of every month at Five15 in Royal Oak. Get Out And Live!, 515 S Washington, **Royal Oak.** 248-515-2551. GetOutAndLive.me

The Conversation Station 5 p.m. Weekly discussion group for LGBTQA 25 and over. Week's topic Who or what amazes you? Get Out And Live!, 714 S. Washington St., **Royal Oak**. 248-981-4227. MarciLWilliams@yahoo.com GetOutAndLive.me

Transgender Lansing Group Meeting 6 p.m. Lansing chapter of Transgender Michigan meets the first Sunday of every month from 6-9 p.m. Transgender Lansing, 469 N. Hagadorn, **East Lansing.** Facebook.com/groups/56386266994/

Monday, Sept. 3

LGBT Roundtable 7 a.m. The LGBT Roundtable is a group of LGBT and ally organization, which get together to take about LGBT issues in Western Michigan. The LGBT Network, 343 Atlas Ave. SE, **Grand Rapids.** 616-458-3511. Thenetwork@grlgbt.org Thenetwork@grlgbt.org

PFLAG Richland 7 p.m. Meets the first Monday of every month, except Labor Day. PFLAG, 9400 East D Ave., **Richland.** 269-377-9401. RichlandPFLAG@gmail.com

Tuesday, Sept. 4

Gay-Straight Alliance in Faith 7 p.m. A group of LGBTQ and allied young adults ages 14-23 welcoming those of all faith backgrounds or no faith background, honoring and respecting each person's faith and spirituality. Alternate between topical discussions and guest speakers on relevant topics for LGBTQ youth. Meets the first and third Tuesday of ever month. G-SAIF, 207 E. Fulton St., **Grand Rapids.** GaysinFaithTogether.org

LanSINGout Rehearsal 7 p.m. LanSINGout Gay Men's Chorus is dedicated to enriching those around them through music, fellowship and community involvement. LanSINGout Gay Men's Chorus, 510 W. Ottawa St., **Lansing**. 517-490-1746. Info@lansingout.org Lansingout.org

Rainbow Writers 7 p.m. Come and share your artistic talents, find people to read and edit/proof your work or just come together to help one another discover their muses. The Lesbian and Gay Community Network of West MI, 343 Atlas Ave. SE, **Grand Rapids**. 616-458-3511. Thenetwork@grlgbt.org Grlgbt.org

Transgender Life Support 7 p.m. Offering support, education, resources and a social structure for Transgender individuals. Facilitated by Arlene Kish, Lorraine Brown, Jessica Manko, Tracy Hoover, Marty Howland and Colt F. Mclssac. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale.** 248-398-7105. Transgenderlifesupport.org

Wednesday, Sept. 5

Senior Koffee Klatch 1 p.m. A lively, discussion and social group for LGBT adults over 45. Group covers topics pertaining to aging and outside speakers. Potluck dinners at members homes, lunches out and holiday parties. Meets ever Wednesday on the upper level of the Affirmations building. Senior Koffee Klatch, 290 W. Road Mile Road, **Ferndale.** 586-573-9932. GoAffirmations.org

Dykes on Bikes 6:30 p.m. Meets the first Wednesday of every month. Dykes on Bikes, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. GoAffirmations.org

Newly Single Support Group 6:30 p.m. Group for all dealing with the end of a relationship and want to talk to others who share similar experiences. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

Alex Levine Quartet in Kerrytown

Thursday, Sept. 6

LGBT Professionals Network Mixer 6 p.m. Join the Kalamazoo LGBT Professionals Network for their monthly social mixer. Come meet new friends and check out a great nightlife location in Kalamazoo. 266 E. Michigan Ave., **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-4234. Kglrc.org

Speak Out 7 p.m. Offers a welcoming environment for LGBT people to improve their public speaking and leadership skills. Meets the first and fourth Thursday of every month. Jim Toy Community Center, 319 Braun Ct., **Ann Arbor**. 734-995-9867. Crystalr@jimtoycenter.org

Friday, Sept. 7

Womyn's Film Night 7 p.m. Film: Sommore: The Queen Stands Alone. 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

S.P.I.C.E. 7:30 p.m. S.P.I.C.E. works to empower and enhance the lives of women of color in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Questioning community in Metropolitan Detroit, by eradicating the health, social and educational barriers facing them. Meetings are on the first Friday of every month. S.P.I.C.E., 290 W. 9 Mile Road, **Ferndale.** 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

Saturday, Sept. 8

Transgender Resource Group 7 p.m. All ages, sexual and gender identities are members. Allies are welcome too. This is a support and social group, with an emphasis on advocacy and education. The Lesbian and Gay Community Network of West MI, 343 Atlas Ave. SE, **Grand Rapids**. 616-458-3511. Thenetwork@grlgbt.org GRlgbt.org

Sunday, Sept. 9

GLSEN Southeast Michigan Lifesaver Luncheon 1 a.m. GLSEN Southeast Michigan works to address bullying in schools by anti-LGBT bias trainings of school staff and connection of Gay Straight Alliance clubs in Junior High and High Schools in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb County. GLSEN Southeast Michigan, One Riverbank Road Belle Isle, **Detroit**. 248-716-0106. GLSENsemi@gmail.com Glsen.org/southeastmichigan

Fall Fab Fest 1 p.m. The only Fall welcome event specifically supporting and welcoming LBGT and ally students. Western Michigan University, Western Michigan University, **Kalamazoo**. 269-387-2123. LGBT-Coordinator@wmich.edu

PFLAG St. Joseph/Berrien County Meeting 2 p.m. Meets the second Sunday of every month. PFLAG St. Joseph/Berrien County, 4340 Lincoln Ave., **St. Joseph.** PFLAGBerrienCounty@yahoo.com

Rainbow Book Club 4:30 p.m. Book club dedicated to reading and discussing classic and contemporary lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer literature. Meeting since before 1998, every second Sunday of the month. Rainbow Book Club, 319 Braun Ct., **Ann Arbor.** 734-995-9867. Catherine.herne@gmail.com

The Conversation Station 5 p.m. Weekly discussion group for LGBTQA 25 and over. Week's topic: What was the worst mistake you ever made? Get Out And Live!, 714 S. Washington St., **Royal Oak**. 248-981-4227. MarciLWilliams@yahoo.com GetOutAndLive.me

MUSIC & MORE

CONCERTS

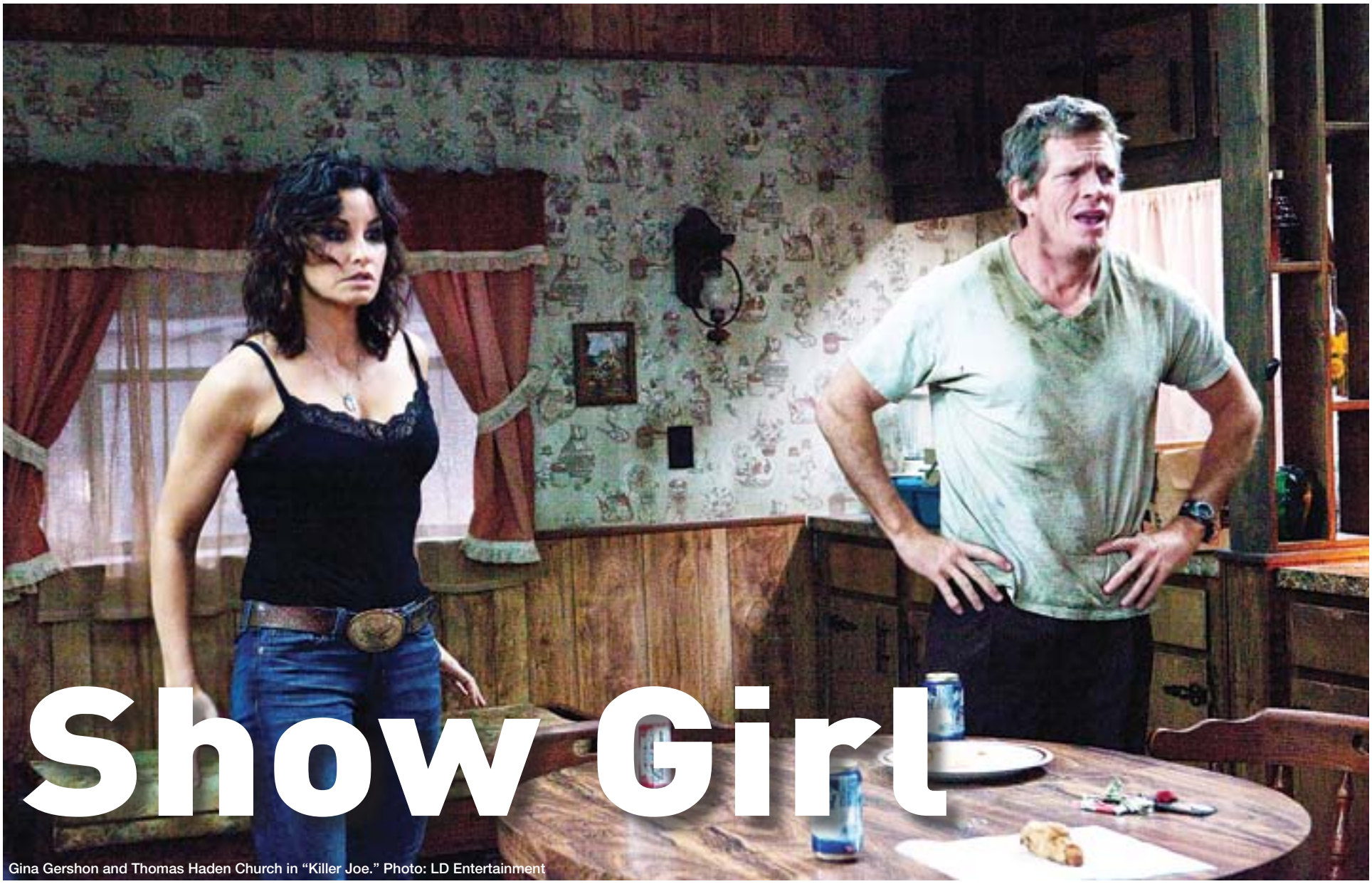
Intersection "Bronze Radio Return" Tickets: $8-10. Intersection, 133 Grandville Ave., Grand Rapids. 7 p.m. Sept. 5. 616-451-8232. SectionLive.com

Intersection "Dirty Dozen Brass Band" Tickets: $17-20. Intersection, 133 Grandville Ave., Grand Rapids. 7 p.m. Sept. 6. 616-451-8232. SectionLive.com

Intersection "The Twin Cats" Tickets: $10. Intersection, 133 Grandville Ave., Grand Rapids. 8 p.m. Sept. 7. 616-451-8232. SectionLive.com

Kerrytown Concert House "Alex Levine Quartet" Guitarist Alex Levine recently completed a degree in jazz studies at the University of Michigan, and formed a quartet as a vehicle for performing his original music. The quartet, Alex Levine (guitar), Marcus Elliot (saxophone), Ben Roston (bass), and Julian Allen (drums), has collaborated in a multitude of situations, including as sidemen for top jazz musicians in the region, in Ann Arbor hip-hop band "Tree City and the Contra Band", as modern dance accompanists, studio session musicians, and most recently in the production of Ben Rolston's debut album, Fables. Tickets: $5-25. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 N Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Sept. 7. 734-769-2999. Kerrytownconcerthouse.com

See Happenings, page 33



Gina Gershon and Thomas Haden Church in “Killer Joe.” Photo: LD Entertainment

Show Girl

Gina Gershon On Her Crotch Close-Up and How It’s Cool to Play Gay Now

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Vagina. That’s the first thing to come up during my recent interview with Gina Gershon, who goes full-frontal as Sharla in the awesomely twisted “Killer Joe.”

The actress plays a trashy two-timer who gets caught in the middle of a family’s murder plot when they hire a hit man (Matthew McConaughey) to take out their mother to collect the life insurance money. Just minutes into the movie, and there she is – all of her.

We got Gershon on the phone to chat about her crotch coat, the agent that almost stopped her from playing a lesbian in one of her most lady-loved films and why she *really* wishes she were gay.

Are you sick of talking about your vagina yet?

You mean my merkin? I never get tired of talking about my merkin.

Did you name your merkin?

Yes, I believe I was calling my merkin Bertha – a big, heavy-set merkin. Make room for Bertha! She’s ready for her close-up.

This isn’t the first time you’ve been part of a movie that was rated NC-17. Do you think the MPAA has been fair to the movies you’ve starred in?

Listen, I think the whole rating system is unfair. It’s just arbitrary and there’s no consistency and I find it fairly ridiculous. I mean, “Showgirls” was NC-17 – why? I’m still not really sure. I guess there was a lot of nudity. And in this country if you cut off a boob, it’s rated PG; if you just show them, then they’re sometimes NC-17. “Bound” was going to be NC-17 because that love scene was very intense and very beautiful and didn’t show anything of Jennifer (Tilly) or myself, but it was too much of a love scene so we had to change it. Once it was more of a fucking scene then they were like, “Yeah, that’s OK.”

You can get away with full-on sex but you can’t show lesbian love?

It seems a little bit strange to me. I just think the whole rating system is arbitrary. I don’t quite get it. Of all of them, “Killer Joe” probably should be NC-17 if we’re going by an NC-17 rule, which in Europe they don’t have. I forced my parents to take me to see “The Exorcist” at 11. I was completely enthralled and so excited; my mother was mortified. Had I been a different 11-year-old, I might’ve been completely traumatized. So it’s up to the parents and the kid to know what they can and can’t handle.

To me, it’s a hardcore movie, and I think people should know going in. It ain’t a Disney film! That being said, and because of this system, I’m really respectful and completely behind (director) William Friedkin in choosing not to change a frame. He’s earned the right to make the film that he wants to make – and god bless him for it. I think it’s great. It’s just a bummer that it’s harder to roll out. It can’t show in as many theaters, but I think word of mouth is getting out. People who want to see this film are going to see it.

With “Bound,” your agent told you at the time that playing a lesbian role would ruin your career. But you did anyway. Why did you take the role of Corky despite your agent’s advice?

Because it was a great role. The hero stories were always men – they got the money, they got the girl, they got away with things. When I read this movie, I was like, “Wow, I get to be the hero.”

I’m really proud that I did that film. And so what – at the end of the day, I got new agents. They literally said, “We can’t represent you if you do this,” and I said, “OK, here’s your commission; I’m doing this film.”

See Show Girl, page 31

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► Show Girl

Continued from p. 29

So it was worth the sacrifice?

Yeah, it was actually.

Do you think actors are still being told to avoid gay roles?

No, man. The gayer the role, they're like, "Do it! You'll get nominated for an Academy Award." That just goes to show how far we've come. Before it was going to ruin your career. Not anymore.

Are you currently looking at any gay roles?

I don't look at roles if they're gay or straight or young or old or black or white. I just don't distinguish roles like that. I look to see if I can relate to what the character is going through or if I like the whole story and if I like the director. I like colorful stories.

Thomas Haden Church, Matthew McConaughey and Gina Gershon in "Killer Joe." Photo: LD Entertainment

Your co-star in "Killer Joe," Matthew McConaughey, is also in another recent movie, "Magic Mike," as a stripper. As a dancer in "Showgirls," did you approve?

Wasn't he great? He was so great. I'm so proud of him. As soon as I saw him, I told him, "Dude, that was awesome." He really did a great job. He showed more ass than I did in "Showgirls," too. Look at that. They don't make a big deal about that!

Is it a double standard?

Yes and no. I think "Magic Mike" wouldn't have been made 10 years ago with big movie stars in it. There's no way their agents would have let them play this 10 years ago, or maybe even seven years ago.

So, fried chicken. Will you ever look at a chicken leg the same after fellating one in "Killer Joe"?

Oh yeah. It's still finger lickin' good to me. (Laughs) I've never been a KFC girl but I do love fried chicken. I had a Southern black lady when I was younger who was the real deal, and she taught me how to make fried chicken. When she would make fried chicken, it was a special event. It was really good! (Co-star) Juno (Temple's) like, "I don't really like fried chicken. I don't get it." I'm like, "Yeah, you're from London; you gotta have *real* Southern fried chicken."

How was the fried chicken in "Killer Joe"?

It was good! We were in New Orleans so I made sure it was. I can't remember if we did Coop's or Church's – there was a big debate. But I made sure it was good fried chicken. New Orleans. Hello! (Laughs)

Before that scene, I knew I wanted to devour the fried chicken. I had to keep eating it and I thought, "Well, I wanna make sure it's good fried chicken." I do like my fried chicken. Not gonna lie.

In an interview with DIVA a couple of years ago, you said you wish you could be gay. Can you clarify what you meant?

It was one of those days. At that time I was looking around at my gay men friends and they were so hot and sexy and nice and I'm like, "Ugh, why can't I be with them?" If I were a gay man, I could be! And then they would want me in that way. (Laughs)

That's what all the straight girls say: That gay men are so hot but unavailable.

Yeah. Well, they're still a girl's best friend!

If you were lesbian, which character of yours would you hook up with?

Corky. That's the most narcissistic answer, isn't it? (Laughs)

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Editor's Pick

"The Rocky Horror Show" returns at 8 p.m. Friday, Sept. 7 and Saturday, Sept. 8 to Meadow Brook Music Festival.

With Best Actor winning performances in "Oedipus" at Williamston Theatre and featured roles in the films "Real Steel" with Hugh Jackman and "Game of Death" with Wesley Snipes, John M. Manfredi returns to star in this fan-favorite production. Also reprising their roles are Jason Richards, Andrea Mellos, James Bowen, David Regal, Jodie Kuhn-Ellison and Andrew Huff.

"The Rocky Horror Show" follows the exploits of stranded lovers Brad and Janet as they seek refuge "over at the Frankenstein place." Have they been rescued from the storm? One thing is certain, all is definitely not what it seems.

Tickets at $22.50 reserved pavilion and $17.50 general admission. For tickets, call 800 745-3000.

► Happenings

Continued from p. 28

Kerrytown Concert House "Quartet San Francisco" Non-traditional in their delivery, QSF redefines the sound of chamber music. "When the music says swing, we swing. When the music says groove, we groove." Tickets: $5-25. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 N Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Sept. 13. 734-769-2999. KerryTownConcertHouse.com

Olympia Entertainment "The Big Show at the Joe" Starring Young Jeezy, T.I., Wake Flocka Flame, B.o.B., Cash Out and LoveRance. Tickets: $48-128. Joe Louis Arena, 19 Steve Yzerman Dr., Detroit. 7 p.m. Sept. 1. 313-396-7000. Olympiaentertainment.com

The Ark "Bill Kirchen" Tickets: $20. The Ark, 316 S. Main, Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Aug. 31. 734-761-1800. TheArk.org

The Ark "Ruthie Foster" Tickets: $20. The Ark, 316 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Sept. 4. 734-761-1800. TheArk.org

The Fillmore Detroit "The Offspring" Tickets: $29.50-39.50. Fillmore Detroit, 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 7 p.m. Aug. 31. TheFillmoreDetroit.com

The Fillmore Detroit "Metric" Tickets: $32-39. Fillmore Detroit, 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 7 p.m. Sept. 8. TheFillmoreDetroit.com

The Majestic "The Atlas Moth" Hailing from Chicago, The Atlas Moth takes their bluesy hometown roots and combines that with New Orleans style sludge, riffy death metal and 60s psychedelic. Tickets: $10. The Majestic, 4140 Woodward Avenue, Detroit. 8 p.m. Sept. 1. 313-833-9700. MajesticDetroit.com

The Palace "Kiss" Kiss and Motley Crue's 'The Tour 2012'. Tickets: $36-90. DTE Energy Music Theatre, 7774 Sashabaw , Clarkston. 7 p.m. Sept. 5. 248-377-0100. Palacenet.com

Wharton Center for the Performing Arts at Michigan State University "Sheryl Crow" Free-spirited, fearless and fierce, Sheryl Crow has garnered nine Grammys; performed duets with musical luminaries such as Sting and Mick Jagger; released seven studio albums which sold more than 35 million records worldwide; is a cancer survivor and passionate humanitarian; and has even performed for President Obama. Tickets: $38-78. Cobb Great Hall, 1 Wharton Center Dr., East Lansing. 7 p.m. Sept. 9. 517-432-2000. WhartonCenter.com

OTHER

Jewish Community Center of Metro Detroit "Stephen Gottlieb Festival of the Arts" A week of lectures, music, dance, fine arts and more. Jewish Community Center, 6600 W. Maple, West Bloomfield. Aug. 31-Sept. 2. 248-432-5692. jccdet.org

The Palace "UPROAD Festival" Sponsored by Rockstar Energy, this concert includes Shinedown, Godsmack, Staind, Papa Roach and Adelitas Way. Tickets: $19-50. DTE Energy Music Theatre, 7774 Sashabaw , Clarkston. 1:30 p.m. Sept. 7. 248-377-0100. Palacenet.com

THEATER

CIVIC/COMMUNITY THEATER

A Man For All Seasons $17. Village Players, 34660 Woodward Ave., Birmingham. Sep. 7-16. 248-644-2075. Birminghamvillageplayers.com

Legally Blonde-The Musical $18-20. Stagecrafters at Baldwin Theatre, 415 S. Lafayette, Royal Oak. Sep. 7-30. 248-541-8027. stagecrafters.org

PROFESSIONAL

A Little Work $18. Two Muses Theatre at Barnes and Noble Booksellers Theatre, 6800 Orchard Lake Road, Bloomfield. Sep. 6-30. 248-850-9919. TwoMusesTheatre.org

Adult Education: Storytelling After Hours $10. The Acorn Theater, 107 Generations Dr., Three Oaks. Sep. 27. 269-756-3879. acorntheater.com

Avenue Q An hour-long showcase. Free, but reservations recommended. NightBlue at The Acorn Theater, 107 Generations Dr., Three Oaks. 8 p.m. Sep. 6. 269-756-3879. acorntheater.com

Boeing-Boeing $26-$39.75. Mason Street Warehouse, Saugatuck Center for the Arts, 400 Culver St., Saugatuck. Through Sep. 2. 269-857-2399. sc4a.org

Burn This $27-34. Performance Network Theatre, 120 E. Huron St., Ann Arbor. Through Sep. 2. 734-663-0681. performancenetwork.org

Deathtrap Previews Sept. 6-7. $29-32. Tipping Point Theatre, 361 Cady St., Northville. Sep. 6-Oct. 7. 248-347-0003. tippingpointtheatre.com

On Golden Pond $17.50-40. The Purple Rose Theatre Company, 137 Park St., Chelsea. Through Sep. 1. 734-433-7673. purplerosetheatre.org

Raunch and Roll $34. Barn Theatre, 13351 W. M-96, Augusta. Aug. 28-Sep. 2. 269-731-4121. barntheatre.com

Shopping & F*ing** $10-20. The Ringwald Theatre, 22742 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Sep. 8-24. 248-545-5545. TheRingwald.com

Stories with Piano $46-$56. The Berman Center for the Performing Arts, 6600 W. Maple Rd., West Bloomfield. 8 p.m. Sep. 1. 248-661-1900. theberman.org

The Language of Birds Rosa Luxemburg and Me $25. The Acorn Theater, 107 Generations Dr., Three Oaks. Sep. 7-9. 269-756-3879. acorntheater.com

The Rocky Horror Show $17.50-22.50. Meadow Brook Music Festival, 3554 Walton Blvd., Rochester Hills. Sep. 7-8. 1-800-745-3000. Palacenet.com

ART 'N' AROUND

Ann Arbor Art Center "Five to Nine: An Exhibition of Extracurricular Work From Creative Young Professionals" 117 W. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. July 27-Sept. 2. 734-995-8004. Annarborartcenter.org

Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History "The Chris Webber Collection" 315 E. Warren, Detroit. May 1-Sept. 30. 313-494-5853. TheWright.org

Cranbrook Art Museum "George Nelson: Architect / Writer/ Designer / Teacher" 39221 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills. June 16-Oct. 14. 877-462-7262. CranbrookArtMuseum.org

Epiphany Studios "Epiphany Glass Open House" 770 Orchard Lake Road, Pontiac. July 5-Nov. 1. 248-745-3786. Epiphanyglass.com

Kalamazoo Institute of Arts "Elliot Erwitt: Dog Dogs" 314 S. Park St., Kalamazoo. July 7-Sept. 23. 269-349-7775. Klarts.org

Lawrence Street Gallery "All Girls, No Boys" 22620 Woodward Ave. Suite A, Ferndale. Sept. 1-Sept. 30. 248-544-0394. Lawrencestreetgallery.com

Michigan State University Museum "Echoes of Silent Spring: 50 Years of Environmental Awareness" 409 W. Circle Dr., East Lansing. June 1-Nov. 30. Museum.msu.edu/?q=node/527

Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit "Anri Sala" 4454 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Sept. 7-Dec. 30. 313-832-6622. Mocadetroit.org

The Detroit Institute of Arts "Patti Smith: Camera Solo" 2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit. June 1-Sept. 2. 313-833-7900. DIA.org

The Detroit Institute of Arts "Picasso and Matisse" 2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit. June 11-Oct. 29. 313-833-7900. DIA.org

The Gallery Project "Quantified Self" 215 S. Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor. Aug. 30-Oct. 7. 734-997-7102. TheGalleryProject.com

University of Michigan Museum of Art "Flip Your Field: Abstract Art from the Collection" 525 S. State St, Ann Arbor. June 9-Sept. 2. 734-647-0524. Umma.umich.edu

University of Michigan Museum of Art "Judith Turner: The Flatness of Ambiguity" 525 S. State St, Ann Arbor. June 9-Sept. 2. 734-647-0524. Umma.umich.edu

University of Michigan Museum of Art "Jesper Just: This Nameless Spectacle." 525 S. State St., Ann Arbor. Aug. 21-Dec. 9. 734-763-4186. Umma.umich.edu

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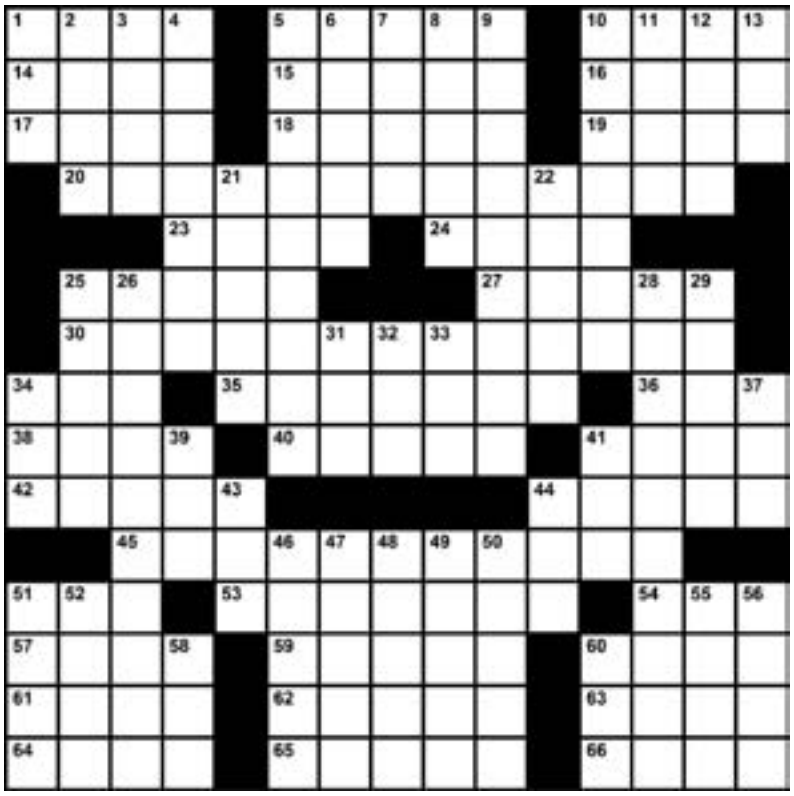

Across

1 “Gay ___ Sutra”
5 Prickteasers
10 Alpert of “Mame” fame
14 Aladdin or Scheherazade
15 In-your-face
16 Words said near crystal balls
17 Cans, in the UK
18 Word to someone stroking your tummy
19 Mane location
20 Start of a Gore Vidal quote
23 Fill with bullets
24 Sauna bath sites
25 Hard woody nut
27 Sal Mineo’s role in “Rebel Without a Cause”
30 More of the quote
34 Prefix with Stein?
35 Singer Freddie
36 Disencumber
38 Shankar of sitar
40 Subjects of James IV
41 “Move your butt!”
42 Makes a wet blanket
44 Cups and such
45 More of the quote
51 More of the quote
53 Saikaku’s “Gay Tales of the ___ “
54 End of the quote
57 Picks out, with “for”
59 Traffic cop’s tool
60 Men-only affair
61 Circus sideshow oddity
62 Insurance worker
63 Wang in fashion
64 “I Shot ___ Warhol”
65 Dry runs
66 Treated as a sexual object

Down

1 “Cabaret”’s Kit-___ Klub
2 Opera queen’s delight
3 Author Thomas
4 When repeated, a Faulkner title
5 They shoot off hot stuff
6 Circumvent
7 Output from small pussies
8 Part of the media
9 G-string wearers
10 Doesn’t quite tell
11 Actor Morales
12 Muscle Mary stat
13 Spelling contest
21 “Air Music” composer Ned
22 Full of four-letter words
25 Ang Lee, for one
26 Screwed up
28 Gives a pink slip to
29 Hunter that comes out at night
31 Atomic energy org.
32 “The Name of the Rose” writer
33 On the other hand
34 Hesitation sounds
37 Orientation determiner, some say
39 WWII battle site, for short
41 Half of a ballroom dance
43 Sinking ship’s call
44 X at a frat party
46 Purity unit
47 It may be spitting
48 Mapplethorpe models, often
49 Randolph Scott’s companion Cary
50 Petite pies
51 Eastern discipline
52 What you do at the other end
55 Internally pink
56 “My stars!”
58 Shade of blue
60 Sex Crimes division, to B.D. Wong

Solution on pg 36

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TED, I DIDN'T SAY-
WELL, LET ME TELL YOU, OMAR: I SAW A HOT GUY IN THE MEN'S ROOM, AND I PAID HIM A REAL COMPLIMENTS ON HIS LOOKS.
HE RESPONDED. TURNS OUT HE'S A NICE GUY, AND HE LIKES ME. SO NOW WE'RE GOIN' OUT.
I'M JUST AS SURPRISED AS EVERYONE ELSE.
I COULDA SWORN THAT WAS A MIRROR.

Horoscopes

Be mature, Sagittarius!

BY JACK FERTIG

A long-running Sun-Venus aspect peaks this week, making everyone try too hard to be nice. Both orbs make a hard aspect to Eris boosting pushiness and manipulation. Everyone has room for improvement. Focus on yourself.

ARIES (March 20 – April 19): You generally prefer a more direct approach, but subtlety and intuition are working for you now. A stronger air of authority is also working for you. Learn how to work it now if you want to keep it.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 20): Life rarely goes as planned, so don't beat yourself up for it. In these tough times give yourself full credit for what you have done. Friendly suggestions are more aggravation than help, but could be springboards to sensible ideas.

GEMINI (May 21- June 20): Trading barbs with your friends is all good fun until someone gets hurt. It's way too easy to cross that line. Apologize quickly. Wounded pride can harden quickly into alienation. With some focus you can put your wit to better use.

CANCER (June 21- July 22): This full moon is especially werewolvish. Indulge your inner beast, but remember, there is a time and a place for that. While humanoid, keep your ambitions in check. Focus your critical mind on your goals and keep your critical tongue in check.

LEO (July 23 – August 22): Efforts to help others will probably backfire big time. Focus on your own problems. Get expert advice. You won't like it, but at least consider it carefully. Exercise and clearing away small tasks will help relieve tension.

VIRGO (August 23 – September 22): When your ruler Mercury comes home to your sign on the 31st, you will be witty, wise and compassionate. Until then, keep your ego and your mouth under control. Especially be considerate of your partner. Remember what's important – and who!

LIBRA (September 23 – October 22): Worrying won't get you anywhere. Take a very practical look at your problems and flaws and determine practical steps to improvement. Gentle exercise (swimming?) will help you stay positive and productive. Pushing too hard, at the gym or elsewhere, is asking for trouble.

SCORPIO (October 23 – November 21): Your mind is getting unusually sharp; try to keep your tongue from following suit. Save your critical remarks for those who ask to benefit from your insight, which is still and always best focused on yourself.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 – December 20): Feeling lost and disconnected? Hiding in books and ideas could be a good strategy. Whining is not. It's too easy to feel sorry for yourself. Be mature and philosophical. This will pass.

CAPRICORN (December 21 – January 19): Your instinct to take charge and protect can be simultaneously charming and annoying to your partner, or whomever you want in that role. It's obvious that you care, but your sweetie is a grown-up too and needs a little room to breathe.

AQUARIUS (January 20 – February 18): Advice from your partner may sound a bit harsh, but it's worth heeding. Resist the urge to reciprocate; just resolve to improve. Review your diet and health regimen. Vanity could be interfering with your health. Or is it your sweet tooth?

PISCES (February 19 – March 19): Keep your codependent tendencies in check. A creative outlet can help. Remember that it's therapeutic, probably not to be shared with others. Still your artistic efforts can also be exercises in technique leading to greater proficiency.

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Ann Arbor-Friday

7:30 pm, St. Andrews Episcopal Church Gay AA, 306 N. Division St. Closed/Discussion.

Bloomfield Hills-Thursday

7:00 pm ,Sobriety in The Hills Gay AA, Kirk in The Hills Church, 1340 W. Long Lake Rd. Closed/Discussion.

Detroit-Tuesday / Friday

8:00 pm, Downtown Gay AA, Fort Street Presbyterian Church, 631 West Fort St. Closed/Discussion (Open 1st Friday of every month).

Farmington Hills-Monday

8:00 pm, Suburban West Gay AA, Universalist Unitarian Church, 25301 Halstead (Between 10 & 11 Mile Roads) Closed / Discussion.

Ferndale-Monday / Wednesday / Friday

11:30 a.m., Brown Baggers Gay AA, Affirmations, 290 West 9 Mile Rd. Closed/Discussion.

Ferndale-Wednesday

8 p.m., Diversity Wednesday Gay AA, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 540 W. Lewiston @ Livernois. Closed/Discussion.

Ferndale-Saturday

1 p.m. Brown Baggers Gay AA, Affirmations, 290 West 9 Mile Rd. Closed/Discussion.

8 p.m. Go After Your Sobriety Gay AA, Drayton Ave Presbyterian Church, 2441 Pinecrest. Closed/Discussion.

Livonia-Friday

8 p.m., West Side Story's Gay AA, Providence Medical Center, 7 Mile & Newburgh. Closed/Discussion.

Pontiac-Tuesday / Thursday / Sunday

8 p.m., Pontiac Gay AA, Shrine of St. Joseph, 400 West South Blvd. Closed/Discussion.

Warren-Monday

7:30 p.m., Eastside Serenity Gay AA, Faith-Trinity United Church of Christ, 12221 Martin Rd. East of Hoover. Closed/Discussion.

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112 ANNOUNCEMENTS - VOLUNTEERING

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Solution to puzzle from page 34

K	A	M	A		V	A	M	P	S		H	E	R	B
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